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ABSTRACT

This student booklet and teacher's guide examine the causes and the aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The first two sections of the student booklet briefly summarize the Cold War and describe the unfulfilled promises of Mikhail Gorachev's "perestroika," the rising discontent among the people, and the birth of nationalism within the republics. The next section details the key events leading to the breakup of the Soviet Union. The last section discusses how the United States is responding to the challenges posed by the breakup of an old enemy and the beginning of a new era in foreign relations. Chapters include: (1) "U.S.-Soviet Relations: 1917-1989"; (2) "Upheaval in the Soviet Union: 1990-1991"; (3) "The End of an Empire: March-December 1991"; and (4) "U.S. Foreign Policy: Mapping Out a Post-Cold War Agenda." Six bibliographic references and a section for further reading conclude the text. The teacher's guide contains lesson plans to be used in conjunction with the student booklet, and includes objectives, a list of key terms, a motivator activity, student activities and handouts, and test materials with an answer key. (EH)

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BREAKUP OF THE SOVIET UNION

and how it will affect U.S. foreign policy

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THE BREAKUP OF THE SOVIET UNION

and how it will affect U.S. foreign policy

By Tim Walker

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Contents

Introduction 3

U.S.-Soviet Relations: 1917-1989 5

Upheaval in the Soviet Union: 1990-1991 6

The End of an Empire: March-December 1991 15

U.S. Foreign Policy:
Mapping Out a Post-Cold War Agenda 26

For Further Reading 35

Introduction

The world witnessed a series of historic events during the Gorbachev era—the opening up of Soviet society, the fall of communism throughout eastern Europe, and the end of the Cold War. But few U.S. and Soviet officials and foreign policy analysts expected to see the Soviet empire dissolve in only five dizzying months in late 1991.

The fate of the Soviet Union was sealed when a coup staged by hard-line communists failed to reverse the country's economic and social reforms and send it back to the days of iron-fisted rule. Soon after the coup collapsed, all fifteen Soviet republics, led by Russian republic President Boris Yeltsin, declared their independence. Mikhail Gorbachev, who had struggled to hold the union together, resigned as the last leader of the Soviet Union on December 25, 1991. Replacing the Soviet Union was the hastily formed Commonwealth of Independent States.

The problems that broke apart the Soviet Union remain: economic chaos, ethnic violence, and mounting nationalism. The transformation of the old communist economies to a free-market system continues, but at a slow, painful pace. Boris Yeltsin has warned that if the republics do not soon succeed in improving the quality of life for their citizens, desperate conditions could open the door to the return of an authoritarian government.

Meanwhile, with the demise of its longtime enemy, the Soviet Union, the United States finds it must quickly respond to instability in the former Soviet republics. "History," said U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, "has left us with little breathing space." Recognizing that the former republics are in desperate need of economic aid, the United States appears ready to invest billions of dollars to help democracy and capitalism take hold in the region. But U.S. policymakers still need to look beyond the current crisis and decide what overseas role the United States should play in the twenty-first century. Without the Soviet Union to provide the focus for its foreign policy, the United States must now find a new foreign policy vision for a rapidly changing and increasingly interdependent world.

The following pages will examine the causes and the aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The first two sections will briefly summarize the Cold War and describe the unfulfilled promises of Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika*, the rising discontent among the people, and the birth of nationalism within the republics. The next section details the key events leading to the breakup of the Soviet Union. And the last pages will discuss how the United States is responding to the challenges posed by the breakup of an old enemy and the beginning of a new era in foreign relations.

Questions to Consider While You Read

1. Why was Mikhail Gorbachev hesitant to radically reform the Soviet economy? How did his policy of *glasnost* unintentionally lead to the spread of independence movements throughout the republics?

2. What events in the Soviet Union in late 1990 and early 1991 contributed to a renewal of tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States? Why did the Bush administration initially choose not to embrace Boris Yeltsin?

3. Why did the August coup fail? Why did Yeltsin place much of the blame for the coup on Gorbachev?

4. What are some of the challenges facing the Commonwealth of Independent States? Why do many foreign policy analysts say that the commonwealth will not survive?

5. Why are some U.S. policymakers apprehensive about sending economic aid to Russia and other former Soviet republics? Why has foreign aid in general become so unpopular with many Americans in recent years?

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U.S.-Soviet Relations: 1917-1989

For over forty years, the Cold War with the Soviet Union dominated U.S. foreign policy. The Soviet threat that emerged after World War II transformed the United States—a traditionally isolationist country—into the leader of the western world.

What was it about the Soviet Union that provoked the United States to take on this role and spend hundreds of billions of dollars on nuclear arms, military and economic aid, and propaganda? Most Americans believed the Soviet Union was intent on spreading communism throughout the free world. "History is on our side," Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev declared in 1956. "We will bury you." The Cold War was a conflict between two competing economic and political ideologies—the U.S. capitalist and democratic system versus the Soviet Union's communist society—each one claiming to be greater than the other.

Fear and suspicion between the two countries, however, existed long before the Cold War began. When the communists, led by Vladimir Lenin, came to power during the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the United States became concerned that the Soviets would try to export Marxist socialism. In the early 1920s, as the American socialist movement gained influence, anticommunism in the United States peaked with the arrest of thousands of so-called radicals. This period became known as the "Red Scare."

However, the spread of fascism and Nazism in Europe in the early 1930s and during the world war that followed brought the United States and the Soviet Union together in an uneasy alliance. U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin joined forces with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to defeat Nazi Germany. When the war ended, tension and mistrust between the United States and the Soviet Union reemerged. Both nations, still committed to their economic and political systems, wanted to remake the postwar world in their own image. The United States wanted democratic governments established throughout Europe, but the Soviets set up communist governments in seven eastern European countries. The Cold War had begun.

From the late 1940s to the late 1980s, the foreign policy of the United States was guided by two chief objectives: containing Soviet communism and ensuring the security of a democratic West. U.S. policymakers developed a policy of containment that aimed to prevent communist expansion beyond the Soviet-led countries of eastern Europe. The United States took the lead in providing economic and military assistance to regions of the world—western Europe, Southeast Asia, Central America—vulnerable to communist takeovers. Some of these policies proved more successful than others. The security curtain around western Europe provided by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was highly effective; wars against communist armies in Korea and Vietnam were less so. However, potentially the most destructive campaign the Soviet Union and the United States waged against each other was the massive nuclear arms race that began in the early 1950s and escalated

right up through the 1980s. For over forty years, the threat of nuclear holocaust loomed over the entire world. But this situation would soon change when Mikhail Gorbachev became the Soviet leader in 1985.

On the heels of Gorbachev's domestic reforms and arms control agreements between the two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States retreated from the Cold War battleground. The Soviets withdrew troops from Afghanistan, and the United States cut off military aid to anticommunist *contras* fighting a pro-Soviet government in Nicaragua.

In 1989 and 1990, Gorbachev allowed democratic movements in eastern Europe to topple the Soviet-controlled communist governments that had ruled these countries for forty years. The Cold War was over, and the United States had won. The tension, mistrust, and fear that had characterized U.S.-Soviet relations since World War II had dissolved. All eyes now turned to the unstable and increasingly dangerous situation brewing within the Soviet Union.

Upheaval in the Soviet Union: 1990-1991

After five years of diplomatic triumphs overseas, Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms of *perestroika* (internal restructuring) had ground to a halt by 1990 as the Soviet economy worsened. People had become tired and angry, and nationalism in the Soviet republics was beginning to spread. On one side, radical reformers pushed Gorbachev to take swifter action to improve the economy; on the other side, hard-line factions of the Communist party began to stir. The hard-liners were suspicious that socialism and their own political power would be eliminated by Gorbachev's reforms. Caught in between, Gorbachev walked a political tightrope in 1990 and 1991 that kept him in power, but could not stop his country's descent into economic and social chaos.

Perestroika *in Crisis*

By 1990, it became clear that the Soviet economy was not improving under Gorbachev's leadership and was actually getting worse. For the first time since 1945, the Soviet government reported a fall in gross national product (GNP), industrial production, and agricultural output.

However, the economic crisis in the Soviet Union was well under way even before Gorbachev took office in March 1985. The industrialized world, led by the United States, West Germany, and Japan, was marching full speed ahead, and the Soviet Union was being left behind. Gorbachev believed that his nation's prospects for catching up were bleak, unless something dramatic was done to improve its technological and manufacturing base. Shortly after taking office, Gorbachev articulated his vision for the Soviet Union: "Only an intensive, highly developed economy can safeguard our country's position on the international stage and allow her to enter the new millennium with dignity as a great and flourishing power." In 1986, the Soviet leader introduced his policy of *glasnost* (openness), which lifted restrictions on the press, released many cen-

A 1991 survey conducted by a Soviet pollster asked: "What does the Soviet Union offer its citizens?" Sixty-five percent of those asked responded: "Shortages, waiting in lines, and a miserable existence."

sored books, and freed Soviet dissidents. The following year, the vision of *perestroika* was unveiled to restructure the stagnant economy.

But by 1989, economic reform was floundering. What went wrong? Many economists point to Gorbachev's insistence on upholding the general tenets of socialism, which he still believed were valid but in need of improvement. The aim of *perestroika* was to modernize and humanize socialism, not dismantle it.

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In addition, *perestroika* remained more of an abstract goal than a viable economic program. Although past Soviet leaders—Nikita Khrushchev in the 1950s and 1960s and Yuri Andropov in the early 1980s—took positive steps toward economic reform, Mikhail Gorbachev was the first to consider radically transforming the centrally run economy. Therefore, there was no blueprint for him to follow. Gorbachev also found himself caught between radical reformers and old guard communists. The reformers wanted Gorbachev to move more quickly and decisively to improve the economy, including the adoption of free-market measures. On the other side, hard-line communists in the Soviet government, whose power depended on the old system, did everything they could to undermine *glasnost* and *perestroika*.

Consequently, the economic measures Gorbachev proposed in 1988 and 1989 were considered tentative and ineffective by most economists. He lifted price controls on some goods to spur production and fill the empty shelves in shops, but left most socialist mechanisms in place. Gorbachev called his plan the "mixed economy" approach—peppering socialist economics with a small dose of capitalism. Critics argued that Gorbachev had to go the full distance; half-measures and compromise were useless if the Soviet economy was to improve.

The Shatalin Plan. Despite earlier problems, there was optimism for real reform in the fall of 1990. Stanislav Shatalin, Gorbachev's adviser and an economics professor, unveiled his "500-day" program. The plan called for the almost complete transformation of the Soviet economy into a free-market system within 500 days by privatizing property and lifting state price controls on all but 100 consumer goods. This would allow prices to float depending on the capitalist principle of supply and demand. The Shatalin plan was the most radical ever proposed in the Soviet Union and initially was well received by President Gorbachev.

In October, however, Gorbachev introduced a compromise version of the Shatalin program that put reforms on a more gradual timetable. Gorbachev maintained that the Soviet people were not prepared for economic "shock therapy" that would send prices skyrocketing and create national panic. Reformers, including Shatalin, were disappointed by yet another watered-down compromise. They said it still left too much power in the central government bureaucracy.

To bolster his efforts, Gorbachev called on the western industrialized nations (the "Group of Seven"), led by the United States, Germany, and Japan, to provide his government with massive economic aid. But the leaders of these countries decided that Gorbachev's economic programs were not far-reaching enough and that the inefficient Soviet system would be unable to absorb and distribute financial aid wisely.

Tremors in the Republics

The continued deterioration of the Soviet economy was not solely a result of Mikhail Gorbachev's hesitancy to adopt a workable blueprint for radical reform; there were other problems. By early 1990, four of the fifteen Soviet republics had

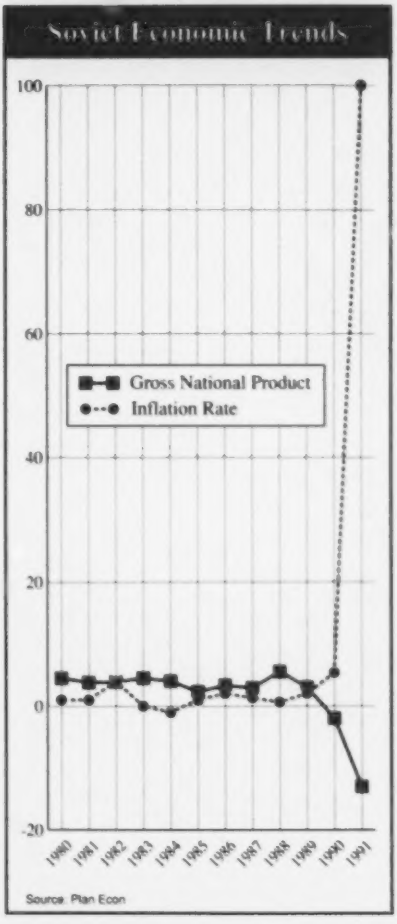
begun campaigns to seize control of their own economic and political affairs from the central government in Moscow.

Many experts say that Gorbachev's costliest error was underestimating the desire of the republics to assert their cultural and ethnic identities and acquire some degree of self-rule from Moscow. He believed that *glasnost* and *perestroika* would calm these nationalist movements and unite the republics behind the Kremlin and together work toward reforming Soviet society. Instead, his programs triggered the independence movements that would eventually tear the country apart.

The first signs of nationalist disturbance during Gorbachev's presidency had occurred in the republic of Kazakhstan in December 1986. Violent demonstrations were held in the Kazakh capital of Alma-Ata to protest Moscow's removal of the head of Kazakhstan's Communist party, and replace him with an "outsider" from Russia. Gorbachev sent troops to break up the demonstrations. These riots were the first ominous signs that nationalism was reaching a boiling point. However, Gorbachev considered the uprising an isolated incident.

In 1987, the Baltic states—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—quietly began demonstrating for independence. Then, in early 1988, tensions between the republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia over a disputed territory known as Nagorno-Karabakh escalated into violence. Again, troops were sent into the area to end the disturbance.

Going to the Polls. The Azerbaijan uprising and the Baltic protests proved that the Communist party's authority had declined and that to force its rule on the republics would provoke widespread discontent and probably more violence. Gorbachev recognized that for *perestroika* to succeed, political reform was necessary.



In February 1990, Gorbachev, over the fierce objections of hard-line communists, announced that the party had no

other choice but to surrender its constitutionally guaranteed monopoly on power and prove its legitimacy in multiparty, multicandidate elections. Many party members believed this would be suicidal for communist rule, but the Central Committee of the Communist Party voted to hold elections in the Soviet republics in March 1990. In opening up the political system to non-Communist party candidates, Gorbachev displayed the courage and vision many felt had been lacking in his economic program. The elections in the spring of 1990 saw pro-free-market and anticommunist parties make major gains in the republics of Russia, Ukraine, and Belorussia (now Belarus).

Lithuania Makes Its Move

By allowing free elections in the republics, Gorbachev unintentionally fanned the flames of the independence movements that had begun a year earlier. The startling events of 1989 saw communist governments fall in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Romania, setting the stage for similar actions in the Soviet Union. Encouraged by Gorbachev's willingness to allow eastern Europe to break free and believing he was a democrat at heart, republic leaders felt that the time had come to declare their independence from the central Soviet government.

Equipped with a new parliament and a new president, Vytautas Landsbergis, Lithuania voted to sever all ties with the Kremlin and declare its independence in March 1990. The three Baltic republics of Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia were brought into the Soviet Union via a World War II pact with Germany. Lithuania's attempt to break away thus received worldwide encouragement and support.

Gorbachev, however, rejected Lithuania's bid for independence, although he did offer the republic confederate status to make it semiautonomous while still tied to the central government. Landsbergis turned down the proposal and proceeded to lead Lithuania's campaign for independence. Gorbachev threatened the small Baltic state with a military crackdown to crush its government. However, realizing that using force would tarnish his international image as a reformer, the Soviet president instead imposed a strict economic boycott on the runaway republic, cutting off oil and natural gas supplies. To intimidate the population, Soviet tanks were sent to rumble through Lithuania's capital, Vilnius, and airplanes dropped leaflets warning of impending disaster if the declaration of independence was not withdrawn.

Just as Gorbachev had underestimated Lithuania's determination, Lands-

bergis did not expect the Kremlin to react so swiftly and sharply. When it appeared that a bloody confrontation was imminent, Gorbachev and Landsbergis sat down to negotiate. Gorbachev no longer demanded that Lithuania completely revoke its declaration, but asked that their campaign for independence be suspended. Landsbergis agreed, and the Kremlin lifted the economic boycott. By the summer of 1990, the independence movement in Lithuania had been contained. But as one Soviet expert said at the time, "the genie is now out of the bottle."

Boris Yeltsin and the Russian Revolt

Following Lithuania's lead, Estonia, Latvia, and Belorussia declared their intention to break away from the Soviet Union. However, the center of nationalist political protest eventually moved to Russia, the largest of the Soviet republics. And with the protest emerged a leader who could challenge Mikhail Gorbachev on the national level.

Boris Yeltsin spent most of his career as a loyal member of the Communist party and was its top official in Moscow. He was an ally of Gorbachev's when both men were moving up the party ranks and calling for economic and social change. However, when *perestroika* stalled in the late 1980s, Yeltsin became a thorn in Gorbachev's side. Yeltsin frequently stood up at Central Committee hearings and blasted Gorbachev for what he saw as Gorbachev's weak leadership and tentative approach to implementing economic reform. Fed up with the loud and unruly Russian, Gorbachev removed Yeltsin from his post in December 1987, sending him into what appeared to be political oblivion. But over the next two years, Boris Yeltsin slowly worked his way back into the spotlight, criticizing Mikhail Gorbachev at every turn.

In 1990, Yeltsin set his sights on being elected president of the Soviet republic of Russia. He ran on a platform calling for (1) radical economic reforms that would help keep the Soviet Union together (although it would be a looser federation that reduced the role of the Communist party and the KGB—state security police), and (2) the establishment of Russia as a sovereign state. Gorbachev attempted to find a communist candidate to defeat Yeltsin, but failed. In May, the Russian legislature, ready to make a break with the central government, elected Yeltsin to the Russian presidency. (One year later, Yeltsin was elected president directly by the people in a free, multicandidate election.)

In June 1990, the legislature of Russia voted to make Russian laws take precedence over Soviet laws and to declare Russia a sovereign country. As a consequence, in July, at the twenty-eighth Communist Party Congress, Yeltsin announced his resignation from the party and walked out amidst both cheers and boos.

Because Boris Yeltsin was a popularly elected leader, he benefited from a legitimacy with the people that Gorbachev did not have. Most experts believed that if free elections for Soviet president had been held, Yeltsin would have defeated Gorbachev in a landslide. The two men, already rivals, became bitter enemies.

Yeltsin went on national television and said that reform and democracy in the Soviet Union were impossible because Gorbachev "was a communist, is a communist, and will always be a communist," and demanded that he resign immediately. Recognizing that his political standing and the union were in danger, Gorbachev moved to strengthen his powers.

Gorbachev Moves to the Right

By the end of 1990, the Soviet Union had become polarized between the democratic forces for reform and the old guard, hard-line communists. It became more difficult for Gorbachev to hold the center—maintaining that delicate balance between promoting economic reform and preserving the basic features of socialism.

The determination of the republics to acquire economic sovereignty, if not complete independence, was matched by Gorbachev's own determination to hold the union together. In December 1990, he aligned himself with hard-line factions of the Communist party that he had avoided for years—the army and the KGB. The old guard communists had long disagreed with Gorbachev's policies and accused him of "losing eastern Europe" in 1989. Aware that the military had the power to overthrow his government, Gorbachev moved to tie up support with the old guard. He believed that this move would enable him to contain the independence movements and regain control of the direction of the country. He fired his reform-minded interior minister, Vadim Bakatin, replacing him with Boris Pugo, a former head of the KGB, and picked army Colonel Boris Gromov as Pugo's deputy. Gorbachev then went before the Soviet parliament to ask for a constitutional amendment that would expand his powers and rearrange the office of the president to include a new cabinet and a vice president. "While we're sitting here arguing, the situation outside these walls is getting worse by the day," Gorbachev told the parliament. "I must be allowed to act." The Soviet parliament approved the amendments.

Reuters/Bettmann

Russian President Boris Yeltsin is framed by a Russian flag as he addresses supporters.

"A Dictatorship Is Approaching." While he was persuading the parliament to strengthen his powers, Gorbachev received a stunning blow when Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, his old friend and co-architect of the end of the Cold War, resigned from his post. Announcing his decision at the Congress of People's Deputies, Shevardnadze warned that right-wing reactionary forces were threatening the country. "The reformers

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have gone into hiding," Shevardnadze explained. "A dictatorship is approaching. No one knows what this dictatorship will be like, what kind of dictator will come to power, or what order will be established." Although he voiced no criticism of Gorbachev directly, most observers believed Shevardnadze was concerned about the concessions the Soviet president had been making to the hard-liners.

Crackdown in the Baltics. On January 13, 1991, Soviet troops stormed into Lithuania to occupy Communist party property and arrest young men who refused to be drafted into the Soviet army. The assault killed seventeen Lithuanian protesters and injured 160 others. President Landsbergis likened the action to the "military terror" of the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The crackdown in Lithuania was the strongest evidence yet that hard-liners in the military were trying to reassert their power over the country. Observers noted that Gorbachev—who denied official responsibility for ordering the attack—seemed willing to at least look the other way if it helped save the union and his presidency.

The United States Stays the Course

Gorbachev's shift to the right also affected his relationship with the United States. The crackdown in Lithuania, his retreat from reform, and the appointment of hard-line communists to top government posts worried U.S. officials. For the first time, the Bush administration took a step back and openly questioned Gorbachev's commitment to reform, at the same time debating whether it was time to start a dialogue with Boris Yeltsin.

Gorbachev criticized the West on a number of issues, reflecting the old guard communists' new influence on him. Consequently, for a few months, after years of cooperation and friendship, some in the U.S. State Department began to feel the chills of the Cold War return.

U.S. reaction to the Soviet crackdown in the Baltic republics heightened tension between the two countries. President George Bush said he was "especially concerned" that the Soviet actions were "provocative and counterproductive." The Kremlin's response to these statements sounded like the rhetoric of the Cold War, blasting the United States for intervening in the Soviet Union's internal affairs and warning that any more "hasty statements . . . may lead to undesirable consequences." New Soviet Foreign Minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh even went so far as to say that the two superpowers were still in a fragile transitional phase of their relationship between Cold War hostilities and partnership and cooperation. The reckless actions of the United States, Bessmertnykh warned, "could endanger the progress achieved over the previous five years." However, President Bush refrained from a complete denunciation of the action in the Baltics.

Although the Bush administration was concerned over Gorbachev's shift to the right, it never renounced the Soviet leader and was not prepared to greet his rival, Boris Yeltsin, with open arms. Many in the White House viewed Yeltsin

with suspicion, perceiving him as a political opportunist, a "loose cannon," and a slightly authoritarian figure, even though he, unlike Gorbachev, rose to power through democratic elections.

The Bush administration and Gorbachev shared a common interest in preserving the union, although for different reasons. Unlike the Soviet leader, President Bush wanted to see the demise of communism and the spread of democracy in the Soviet Union, but feared that a chaotic collapse of the country would provoke unrest, civil war, and the emergence of strict authoritarian rule. Many foreign policy experts criticized the administration's policy for "putting all its eggs in Gorbachev's basket." By not openly supporting Yeltsin, these critics believed, the United States was discouraging further economic and social reform in the Soviet Union.

The End of an Empire: March-December 1991

By aligning with the communist hard-liners and standing firm against Lithuania, Mikhail Gorbachev may have averted a right-wing takeover, but his political problems continued to worsen. The hard-liners pressured him to take even stronger measures against the republics to once and for all destroy the independence movements. Meanwhile, the reformers had lost hope in the Soviet leader, now believing he was a hostage of the reactionaries. With enemies on both sides, calls for Gorbachev's resignation mounted. Pushed to the edge and willing to make new concessions to the republics, Gorbachev joined forces with Boris Yeltsin to begin work on a new union treaty that would beat back the forces on both the radical left and the reactionary right.

The Nine-Plus-One Agreement

Not all of the fifteen Soviet republics wanted to become independent states; some just wanted more autonomy over their political and economic affairs. Gorbachev continued to insist that holding the union together was crucial, but he

As communism collapsed in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union during 1990 and 1991, statues of communist heroes were torn down. Here, a statue of Vladimir Lenin, leader of the Bolshevik Revolution and founder of the Communist party, is about to topple.

agreed in principle that the republics should have more control over their internal matters. To stabilize the country, the Soviet leader began encouraging the republics to join him in drafting a new union treaty to replace the one that created the Soviet Union in 1922. In March 1991, a nationwide referendum—the first in Soviet history—was held to ask the people if the nation should be preserved as "a renewed federation of equal sovereign states." By a 3-to-1 ratio, voters approved the proposal. However, six republics that demanded independence—the three Baltic states, Armenia, Georgia, and Moldavia—boycotted the vote. Nonetheless, Gorbachev claimed victory and proceeded with negotiations.

In July 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin, and the leaders of eight republics reached an agreement that handed over more administrative control to the republics in exchange for a pledge to remain in the union. The treaty also called for a new constitution and a fresh round of local elections. Gorbachev and the leaders of the nine other republics set aside August 20 to sign the "Nine-Plus-One" agreement. However, to many Communist party loyalists, this treaty was the Soviet Union's death certificate: it handed over too much control to the republics and signaled the end of the old communist order. Hard-liners in the government had been alarmed over changes initiated during the Gorbachev era, but refrained from taking action to roll back the Soviet leader's reforms. With the new union treaty, however, many communist officials thought Gorbachev had crossed the line and was on the brink of destroying the country.

The August Coup

The possibility of a hard-line communist coup that Shevardnadze had warned about was the worst nightmare of everyone—Gorbachev, Yeltsin, President Bush, and especially the Soviet people. On the morning of August 19, 1991—one day before the new union treaty was to be signed—those fears were realized.

Early that morning, the world awoke to the startling news that Mikhail Gorbachev had suddenly taken ill and had been removed as president and replaced by a group of hard-line communists called the State Committee on the State of Emergency. Everyone knew that there was nothing wrong with Gorbachev's health, but that he had been placed under house arrest. "If he is ill," commented a Russian welder upon hearing the news, "I am Nikita Khrushchev."

The committee then issued a series of decrees that banned political parties, strikes, and independent newspapers; imposed curfews and military patrols; and seized all economic institutions.

The hard-line committee, composed of members of the KGB, the military, and Gorbachev's own lieutenants, took to television and radio to explain their actions to the people. "The policy of reform," they said, "has come to a dead end. The country has become ungovernable." A change in leadership was necessary, they said, to avoid the "profound and comprehensive crisis... that threatens the lives and security of the Soviet Union's citizens."

Opposition Mobilizes. The United States and other western countries quickly denounced the coup and refused to rec-

Columns of tanks and armored cars leave Moscow after the failure of the August coup.

ognize the new Soviet leadership. But the most important opposition was taking place in the streets of Moscow, where Boris Yeltsin, who had avoided arrest by the KGB the morning of the coup, was rallying a massive protest at the Russian parliament building. He called for Gorbachev's return and for the Russian people to be united in their resistance. A column of tanks sent to crush the insurrection refused to fire on the crowd of 150,000.

Unable to seize the Russian parliament and quell the protests, the coup began showing signs of confusion, disorganization, and vulnerability. Tension and competition within the leadership from the start led to miscalculations and strategic blunders. By Wednesday, August 21, the hard-line committee was ready to stand down. On August 22, only three days after he was arrested, Gorbachev returned to power, and coup leaders were promptly arrested.

On the Fast Track to Disintegration

The ill-fated coup was Soviet communism's last gasp. On August 19, the Soviet Union seemed to be headed back

to the days of dictatorship and oppression, but only four days later the country was propelled toward peaceful revolution. August to December 1991 witnessed a breathtaking series of events that came to be called the "Second Russian Revolution." The United States and the rest of the world could do little but stand by and watch seventy years of communism end and one of the twentieth century's most powerful and feared nations dissolve.

Showdown at the Russian Parliament. President Gorbachev's return to power was greeted with little fanfare. The people and many in the government placed much of the blame for the takeover squarely on his shoulders. The men who had attempted to overthrow the country, all well-known hard-liners, had been promoted by Gorbachev to preserve his own power and authority. As he was to find out at a session of the Russian parliament a few days after the coup, the people were not in a forgiving mood.

At this meeting, Gorbachev was hit with a barrage of questions and calls for his resignation. While damning the conspirators as men "who wanted to make meat out of us," he defended the Communist party and pleaded with the parliament not to conduct a communist witchhunt but rather to separate the rank-and-file party members from those who masterminded the coup. Most of the country and the parliament, however, viewed the coup as a communist plot and demanded

AP/Wide World Photos

Mikhail Gorbachev, after delivering his resignation speech on December 25, 1991.

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the abolishment of the party. In a dramatic confrontation, Yeltsin taunted Gorbachev and asked the parliament to vote to ban the party. Gorbachev soon gave in under the force of Yeltsin's newfound power.

On August 23, Gorbachev resigned as General Secretary of the Communist party and then banned the party. By eliminating the foundation of his authority, Gorbachev was relegated to taking direction from Yeltsin, whom the Soviet people and the United States now saw as the leader to guide the country's future.

The Center Collapses. By the fall of 1991, independence fever had overrun all fifteen Soviet republics. Even those republics hesitant earlier to declare their sovereignty rushed to do so in the wake of the dismantling of the Communist party. In rapid succession, the republics that had been ready to sign the "Nine-Plus-One" treaty now opted to become independent, joining the Baltic states, Georgia, Armenia, and Moldavia.

In September 1991, Boris Yeltsin began negotiations with leaders of the republics as if the central government no longer existed. Agreements were reached over the next month to maintain a collective economic and defense framework between the republics to promote cooperation and stability.

A New Commonwealth. On December 23, 1991, Russian President Yeltsin and the leaders of Ukraine and Belorussia met at Alma-Ata in Kazakhstan to make the Soviet Union's demise official and create the Commonwealth of Independent States. In the Alma-Ata declaration, the leaders declared that "the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as a subject of international law and a geopolitical reality, is ceasing to exist." The republics pledged to implement free-market reforms, respect one another's territorial integrity, and guarantee their citizens equal rights and freedoms. The formation of the commonwealth marked a hopeful step away from the anarchy and chaos that many predicted would accompany the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Within days, eleven of the fifteen former Soviet republics had joined the commonwealth. (Georgia, undergoing severe nationalist violence, remained a holdout. The three Baltic states—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—chose to become totally independent countries.)

Gorbachev, meanwhile, had become virtually irrelevant. When he urged the republics to keep a scaled-down central government to sustain the cohesion of the union, they refused. Gorbachev denied the legal right of the republics to declare the Soviet Union null and void, but was powerless to stop them.

On December 25, 1991, Gorbachev appeared on Soviet television to announce his resignation as the last leader of the Soviet Union. In his speech, Gorbachev expressed his concern that the breakup of the state strips the people of "the citizenship of a great country," and that "the consequences may turn out to be very hard for everyone." He closed his address by saying: "I am leaving my post with apprehension, but also with hope. I am convinced that sooner or later our common efforts will bear fruit, our nations will live in a prosperous and democratic society. I wish all the best to all of you." The former Soviet leader then signed a

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decree handing control of the Soviet nuclear arsenal over to Yeltsin. The familiar hammer and sickle flag was lowered for the last time.

New Opportunities and Dangers Ahead

The collapse of communism in eastern Europe in late 1989 was accompanied by drunken celebration and optimism for the future. But the Soviet Union's demise in the fall of 1991 generated apprehension and pessimism over what the future might bring for the millions of former Soviet citizens and the rest of the world. From the outset, no one was sure if the new Commonwealth of Independent States would survive. At best it was a shaky confederation, not bound by common ethnic, cultural, or political threads. Each republic faced daunting economic, social, and political challenges to their democratic experiments. If democracy failed, many people feared, hard-line communists or authoritarian and nationalist forces could capitalize on the domestic unrest and stage another takeover. Understanding their precarious situation, the commonwealth leaders immediately moved to address these challenges.

Free-Market Economics: Taking the Plunge. The economic situation in the former Soviet Union was much worse by 1992 than when Gorbachev came to power seven years earlier. Republic leaders are aware that the democracies they aim to develop have little time before social unrest could bring about another authoritarian government. The leaders have generally recognized that they need

The Former Republics

Republic	Population (in millions)	Size (sq. miles)
Armenia	3.3	11,600
Azerbaijan	7.1	33,500
Belarus	10.3	80,200
Estonia	1.6	17,600
Georgia	5.4	26,800
Kazakhstan	16.5	1,048,700
Kyrgyzstan	4.3	77,415
Latvia	2.7	25,200
Lithuania	3.7	25,400
Moldova	4.3	13,000
Russia	147.4	6,600,000
Tajikistan	5.1	55,800
Turkmenistan	3.5	190,400
Ukraine	51.7	235,400
Uzbekistan	19.9	175,000

Source: ACCESS

of the Soviet Union

Culture/Ethnicity
Predominantly Christian population; the most culturally homogeneous of the republics
Shiite Muslim population with close cultural ties to Iran
One of only three Slavic peoples of the former Soviet Union; traditional religion is Greek Catholicism
Baltic state related culturally with Finland, which it borders; the majority of Estonians (69 percent of the population) are Lutheran
Christian country with a strong independent culture
Predominantly Muslim Central Asian republic; the most culturally heterogeneous republic
Predominantly Muslim Central Asian republic
Descendants of the ancient Balts; speak one of two surviving Baltic languages; most Latvians are Lutherans
Predominantly Roman Catholic population; speak one of two surviving Baltic languages
Formerly part of Romania; majority of population is either Greek Catholic or Russian Orthodox
One of three Slavic peoples in the former Soviet Union; home to over 100 ethnic groups and nationalities; dominant religion is Russian Orthodox
Predominantly Muslim Central Asian republic
Predominantly Muslim Central Asian republic
One of three Slavic peoples of the former Soviet Union; predominant religions are Greek Catholicism and Ukrainian Orthodox, a branch of the Russian Orthodox church
Central Asian republic with the largest Muslim population

to set aside their differences and attack the economic crisis perpetuated by hyperinflation, a worthless currency, and food shortages. Economists and western leaders have urged the republics to act fast or face disaster.

Thus far economic reform has not resembled the "big bang" approach of

The Breakup of the Soviet Union: A Chronology

1990

March 11 —Lithuania declares independence from the Soviet Union.

May 29 —Boris Yeltsin is elected president of Russia by the Russian parliament.

June 8-12 —The Russian parliament declares that its laws take precedence over Soviet laws. Three days later, it proclaims Russia a sovereign country.

October 16 —Gorbachev presents a compromise measure of the radical "500-day" Shatalin plan to transform the Soviet economy to a free-market system.

December 25 —The Congress of People's Deputies approves a constitutional amendment expanding the authority of Gorbachev's presidential office and creating a new cabinet and a vice president.

1991

January 13 —Soviet troops storm into Lithuania to seize Communist party property and arrest men who have refused to be drafted into the Soviet army. Fourteen people are killed and 150 wounded.

March 17 —In a nationwide referendum, 70 percent of Soviets vote to keep the union as a "federation of equal sovereign states." Six republics boycott the vote.

June 12 —Boris Yeltsin easily wins the Russian presidency in free multicandidate elections.

July 24 —Gorbachev and the leaders of nine republics, including Yeltsin, announce an accord that will hand over more autonomy to these republics in exchange for a vow

Poland, which quickly adopted sweeping reforms once the communists were thrown out of power. But although reforms in the former Soviet republics have been slow in developing, there are grounds for optimism.

Many experts consider Russia the catalyst for economic reforms in the repub-

to remain part of a looser union. The "Nine-Plus-One" treaty is to be signed on August 20.

August 19-22 —The State Committee for the National Emergency, made up of hard-line communists, arrest Gorbachev, take over the Soviet Union, and declare a six-month state of emergency. Boris Yeltsin leads massive protests at the Russian parliament building in Moscow. Tanks are sent to crack down on the demonstration, but the troops refuse to fire on the protesters. By the third day, the coup falls apart. On August 22, Gorbachev returns to Moscow and the conspirators are arrested.

August 24 —A politically weakened Gorbachev is forced to resign from the Communist party and then ban it.

August 30-31 —The republics of Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan rush to declare their independence from the Soviet Union.

September 6 —The Soviet Union officially recognizes the independence of the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia.

October 18 —Nine republics sign the Treaty on an Economic Community to form a united economy and promote cooperation among the republics. Moldova, Azerbaijan, and Georgia reject the treaty.

December 8 —Boris Yeltsin and the leaders of Ukraine and Belarus form the Commonwealth of Independent States. By December 21, eleven of the fifteen Soviet republics have joined the commonwealth.

December 25 —Gorbachev announces his resignation as president of the Soviet Union, officially ending the Soviet Union. U.S. President George Bush officially recognizes the Commonwealth of Independent States.

lics. Russia has the strongest economic base: 80 percent of the commonwealth's land area and energy resources, the largest industries, and the most trained workers. Perhaps most importantly, Russia's leader, Boris Yeltsin, is thought by most experts to be committed to western-style capitalism.

In January 1992, Yeltsin took a huge step toward free-market reform by lifting price controls on consumer goods. This move was meant to coax such goods back into the stores and curb the massive budget deficit. Yeltsin also proposed to base wages on the level of productivity, liberalize foreign trade, and convert defense industries to the production of civilian goods. Like Gorbachev, Yeltsin has clashed with communists in the Russian parliament, who wanted to stop the reforms and give the legislature a greater voice in deciding what economic measures, if any, should be taken. Frustrated by what they saw as attempts by the parliament to undermine the president's authority, Yeltsin's cabinet threatened to resign. But the parliament voted to give Yeltsin a free hand in pursuing radical reforms, thus fending off a catastrophic confrontation that could have halted Russia's progress.

In April 1992, Russia and twelve other former Soviet republics received an important boost when they won membership to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which the Soviet Union refused to join when the organization was founded in 1944. As members, these republics will receive more than $6.5 billion in IMF and World Bank loans during the first year of their membership. This is a crucial development because it is a major step for the former Soviet republics toward eventual integration with western economies.

Overall, the shelves in shops throughout Russia seem to be better stocked with consumer goods today than they have been over the last couple of years. However, the transition to a free-market system in the republics has proceeded very slowly. These uncertainties have prevented western countries from investing in the former Soviet Union, which is crucial to the long-term success of Yeltsin's economic reforms.

Nationalism and Ethnic Violence. Threatening the cohesion of the already fragile Commonwealth of Independent States is the ongoing ethnic tension and nationalist rivalries in and among the former Soviet republics. Tensions have always existed, but strict communist rule had kept a lid on them for seventy years. Fears spread that the region would disintegrate amongst civil war and chaos because there are still areas that are threatened by decades-old hatred.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, for example, war between Azerbaijan and Armenia broke out immediately over a disputed enclave of land called Nagorno-Karabakh. The animosity between predominantly Muslim Azerbaijan and Christian Armenia goes back centuries, but the recent conflict centers around the borders drawn up by former Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. In the 1920s, Stalin carved Nagorno-Karabakh out of Armenia to become a region within Azerbaijan. Armenia now wants to reclaim it. Thus far, over 1,000 people have died, and quests for a solution have turned up little.

Moldova (formerly Moldavia) was once part of Romania, but was annexed into the Soviet Union in 1939. Seventy percent of the population is of Romanian descent and wants the republic to reunite with Romania—an idea unacceptable to the 12 percent of the population who are Russians living in eastern Moldova. Those Russians have declared their independence and are calling themselves "Dniestre Republic," but so far their small region has not been recognized by either Russia or Moldova.

Russia vs. Ukraine. Ukraine, with a population of 50 million and a land mass of 233,000 square miles, has long been suspicious of Russia. Tensions between the two date back to 1920 after Russia conquered independent Ukraine following World War I. In the 1930s, Joseph Stalin forced Ukraine to adopt the Russian culture and language. More recently, the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine contaminated much of the republic with radiation, ruining a great deal of farmland. The episode was Ukraine's latest reminder of destructive Soviet economic and environmental policies.

When the Soviet Union dissolved, a rivalry emerged between Ukraine and Russia that has led to clashes over military, territorial, and economic matters and threatens the cohesion of the commonwealth. One dispute involves the distribution of the former Soviet military, specifically the Black Sea naval fleet, which is based in the Crimea, a predominantly Russian-populated peninsula in Ukraine. Yeltsin says that Russia has rightful control over the fleet; Ukraine is determined to retain at least part of it.

Tensions between the two republics were heightened when the parliament of the Crimea declared its independence from Ukraine and its intention to reunite with Russia, of which it was a part until 1954. Ukraine responded that the Crimea's declaration was unconstitutional. Any effort by Russia to reclaim the territory, Ukraine warned, would be tantamount to a declaration of war.

Ukraine's President Leonid Kravchuk has not hidden his desire to see Ukraine become independent of the commonwealth. Ukrainian lawmakers approved a plan in March 1992 to protect their economy from the radical measures adopted by Russia, namely the lifting of price controls. The proposal also includes divorcing Ukraine from the ruble (the Russian and commonwealth currency). Most experts agree that if Ukraine carries out its economic plan, the Commonwealth of Independent States is doomed.

In May 1992, five republics—Azerbaijan, Belarus (formerly Belorussia), Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and Ukraine—refused to sign a pact forming a collective security arrangement for the commonwealth. The agreement calls on signatories to defend each other against outside attack and never to attack one another. The six republics that signed the pact (Armenia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) hailed their action as evidence that the commonwealth was alive and well and hoped it would calm worldwide concerns over the division of the Soviet armed forces into separate national armies.

But others argued that the absence of five signatories underscores how fragile the Commonwealth of Independent States

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really is. Experts note that already many of the republics are looking elsewhere for alliances. For example, the Central Asian republics are orienting themselves with Turkey and Iran, two nations with whom they share similar cultural, religious, and ethnic traits.

Many think that the eleven states eventually going their own way is not necessarily dangerous. But they stress that the cohesion of the commonwealth is necessary while the republics remain in the midst of a painful and uncertain transition period.

U.S. Foreign Policy: Mapping Out a Post-Cold War Agenda

With the Soviet Union disintegrated, the United States must now define its role on the global stage during the 1990s and into the twenty-first century. Some argue that it is time for the United States to retreat from its policy of internationalism and refocus time and energy to preserving order at home, rather than off in distant lands. Will this policy really serve America's best interests? Or will it have disastrous results for international peace and stability? As the post-Cold War world faces a new set of challenges, U.S. policymakers are asking: is there really a new world order, and where does the United States fit in?

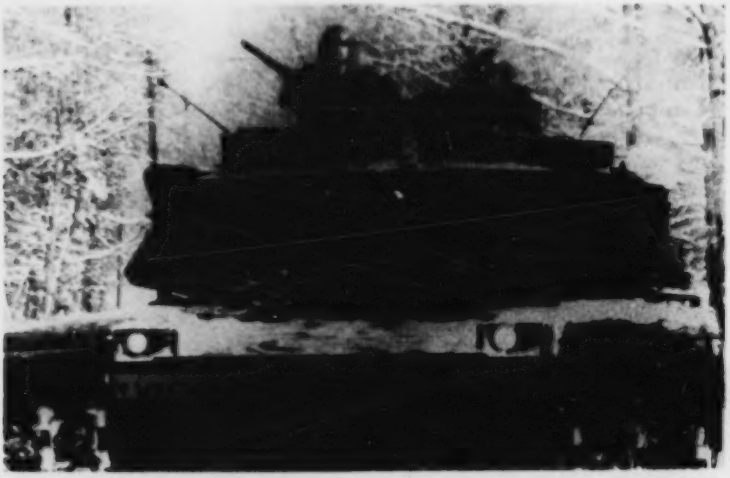
A Return to Isolationism?

In September 1991, as the Soviet Union headed for dissolution, President George Bush addressed the General As-

Does NATO Have a Future?

In 1949, the United States joined Canada and ten western European nations to form the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Led by the United States, the alliance's aim was to provide a military security blanket for Europe to deter possible Soviet aggression. Forty years later, the Cold War is over and the Soviet threat gone. Many experts call NATO the most successful alliance in history. "The Cold War was won without firing a shot," said one European leader. But now, with no common purpose to hold it together and Europe possibly becoming a dominant region of the world, many are asking: Is there still a need for NATO?

In November 1991, the leaders of the alliance met in Rome to discuss NATO's future and the broader question of the U.S. influence on an increasingly independent and powerful Europe. Many believed the days of U.S. dominance were over and that Europe was ready to defend itself. At the summit, President George Bush put the matter directly to the NATO members: "If, my friends, your ultimate aim is to provide independently for your defense, the time to tell us is today." No one spoke out. The member nations signed a declaration to continue the political and military alliance with the United States while recognizing that NATO's traditional



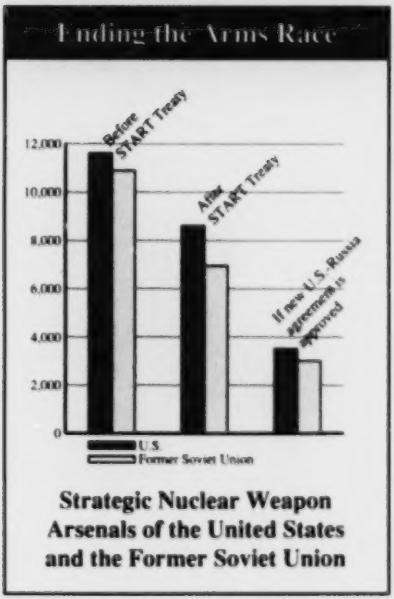
unifying principle of the threat of communism was finished. The declaration also stipulated that the United States would remain the leader of the alliance, but that the European nations would provide more troops for their defense and would have a louder voice in the decisionmaking process.

Civil war in Yugoslavia, the instability of the former Soviet republics, and turmoil in the Middle East have helped to keep NATO in existence. At a NATO conference in May 1992, member nations endorsed plans for using the alliance's troops as a peacekeeping force throughout Europe, possibly including Yugoslavia —a break from the traditional policy of using its forces on alliance territory only. NATO's members believe the alliance with the United States is the only organization that has the military infrastructure and expertise to fulfill peace-keeping tasks that are too daunting for the United Nations.

Nonetheless, the United States is in the middle of deep troop reductions. By 1995, the U.S. force in Europe will be cut from 326,000 to 150,000, and some American officials have called for an even larger reduction. General John Galvin, former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO forces, believes a U.S. presence in Europe is still essential: "The force readiness is there for anything from peace enforcement to humanitarian aid missions. We could all go home again and leave Europe to itself, but we know from two world wars that didn't work. It didn't work before. We doubt it would work again."

sembly of the United Nations on America's global role in the 1990s. He reassured many nations that the United States "would not retreat into isolationism." The collapse of communism, the president said, did not guarantee peace and stability around the world. A new set of challenges that replaced the Soviet threat called for continued U.S. leadership.

"America First." Many Americans do not believe that these new challenges threaten any vital interest of the United States. In 1991, a select group of politicians dusted off a policy from the 1930s and reintroduced it to the American people: isolationism. Before World War II, the United States maintained an isolationist position in most foreign policy matters: the American role abroad was practically nonexistent. Even after World War I, the public generally wanted nothing to do with international politics, preferring to concentrate their political and financial resources on solving domestic problems. In the early 1930s, the country was more concerned with pulling out of a devastating economic depression than intervening in the affairs of foreign nations. "America First!" was a popular slogan in those days when the United States was divided over whether to get involved in the war brewing in Europe.



Strategic Nuclear Weapon Arsenals of the United States and the Former Soviet Union

After World War II, when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and Adolf Hitler came close to controlling the entire European continent, the isolationist cause was discredited in the minds of most experts. The fight against Soviet communism during the Cold War kept America united following World War II.

When communism fell in the late 1980s and early 1990s, many Americans renewed the call for "America First." These proponents of the new isolationism believed that the United States could now withdraw from international affairs and concentrate on its many domestic problems. Forty years of defending the world against communism had taken its toll on the U.S. economic and social infrastructure. A huge national debt, a failing educational system, widespread poverty, and a weakened economy were the issues that many believed posed the biggest threat to American national security.

In addition, many Americans argue that the country's first priority should be to restore its economic competitiveness, an area in which the United States has been falling behind Japan and Germany. Many foreign policy experts, economists, and international leaders believe that the

Department of Defense

After nine years of negotiation, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) was signed by Mikhail Gorbachev and George Bush in July 1991. The treaty calls for a reduction of the strategic nuclear arsenal of the United States down to 8,600 warheads and the arsenal of the Soviet Union down to 7,000 warheads. Six months after the Soviet Union dissolved, President Bush and Russian President Boris Yeltsin agreed to further reduce their arsenals down to approximately 3,500 warheads each.

true superpowers in the twenty-first century will be those who are winning the economic race, not the arms race. Isolationists argue that, whereas communism was unquestionably a threat to free nations everywhere, the internal problems of a new crop of democratic nations in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are really not the concern of the American people.

Military Retreat. Most experts agree that a limited U.S. disengagement from its military commitments makes sense. Many have called for a $200 billion cut in the defense budget over the next five years. Reducing the number of U.S. troops in Europe has been under way, but the United States is committed to leaving a force of approximately 150,000 there to respond to any unexpected crisis. The Bush administration said that it wanted to reduce the defense budget no lower than $50 billion by 1996. According to George Bush, the United States is the only nation left that has the military power to respond to sudden instability, similar to the way it led the multinational coalition against Saddam Hussein and Iraq during the Persian Gulf crisis in 1990-1991.

Critics of the new isolationism agree with Bush, arguing that U.S. leadership is needed now more than ever. Secretary of State James Baker has said that U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War was not aimed exclusively at defeating communism, but also at promoting "a different world, free from the shadows of war, of political tyranny, of economic distress." Crises are emerging again in eastern Europe and among several former Soviet republics—a potentially disastrous situation that, according to proponents of American internationalism, requires an active and constructive U.S. role in world affairs.

Arms Control

The end of the Cold War has provided the United States and the former Soviet republics with a historic opportunity to end the nuclear arms race and drastically reduce global nuclear proliferation.

During the August coup, one of the major fears of the United States was that the Soviet Union's 27,000 nuclear weap-

ons would fall into hostile hands. After the Soviet breakup, the United States was alarmed at the prospect of having to deal with four new nuclear powers instead of one. If tensions persisted between the republics, was nuclear confrontation possible? Could these republics become a nuclear "marketplace" that would sell weapons and expertise to hostile or unstable nations?

Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine house the Soviet nuclear stockpile—12,000 strategic, long-range weapons and 15,000 tactical, short-range weapons. Two-thirds of the arsenal is located in Russia. Soon after the commonwealth was created, the four republics agreed that any decision to use these weapons would be made jointly by all members of the commonwealth. In addition, an accord was signed to remove and ship all tactical weapons to Russia, where they would be dismantled.

Complications arose over the status of the strategic arsenals of the four republics, who initially vowed to honor the arms control agreements signed by the Soviet Union, including the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). START, the result of nine years of negotiation between the United States and the Soviet Union, was signed by George Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev in July 1991. It calls for the reduction of the U.S. and Soviet strategic nuclear arsenal down to 8,600 and 7,000 warheads, respectively. But Ukraine and Kazakhstan hesitated to submit to the treaty's terms, believing that holding on to their weapons would contain Russia. Both republics suspected that Russia wanted to become the dominant military power of the commonwealth. These conflicts delayed the U.S. Senate's ratification hearings on START.

However, a major breakthrough occurred in May 1992. After Boris Yeltsin was unsuccessful in obtaining a pledge from the other three republics, the Bush administration took charge of the negotiations. President Bush met with Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev at the White House. On May 23, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus formally agreed to give up all their weapons by the end of the decade and not to seek nuclear arms again (under the terms of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty), leaving Russia as the only nuclear republic. The turning point in the negotiations came when the Bush administration agreed to provide economic aid to the three republics and pay greater attention to their security concerns. This agreement cleared the way for the ratification of the START treaty and the beginning of new arms control talks between the United States and Russia. In June 1992, President Yeltsin accepted a U.S. proposal to reduce the nuclear arsenals of the two nations to approximately 3,500 warheads each by the end of the decade.

The United States hopes that it will also find cooperation for the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE), signed by the United States, the Soviet Union, and their respective European allies in late 1990. The CFE treaty sets ceilings on the number of tanks, artillery pieces, combat aircraft, and helicopters each side can have. The former Soviet republics signed an agreement to abide by the treaty but many doubt whether it will

Susan Biddle/The White House

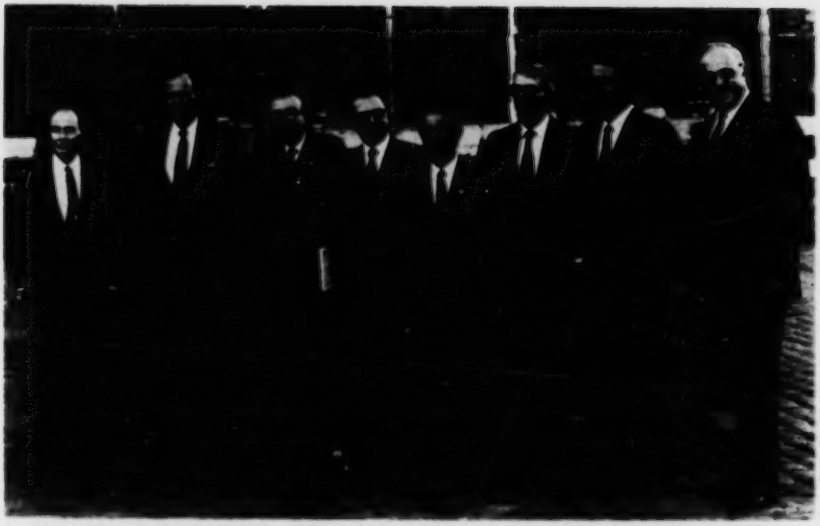
In June 1992, Russian President Boris Yeltsin and President George Bush met in Washington for their first official summit. The two leaders agreed to cut their strategic nuclear arsenals to between 3,000 and 3,500 over the next ten years—about a third of their present levels. President Bush also extended most-favored-nation trade status to Russia. During his stay, Yeltsin became the first Russian or Soviet leader to address a joint meeting of Congress, delivering a well-received speech in which he promised: "There will be no more lies—ever."

be ratified by the individual parliaments. Some republics believe a strong conventional force is essential to their sovereignty and are therefore hesitant to reduce their armed forces, especially those republics that are entangled in ethnic and nationalist violence.

Economic Assistance to the Commonwealth

American leaders have been debating whether to commit foreign aid to the republics. In January 1992, the United States and fifty other countries provided massive relief to help the republics overcome critical shortages of food and medicine. This assistance was relatively uncontroversial in the United States.

The bigger question, however, was whether the United States should develop a large-scale foreign aid program—costing perhaps billions of dollars—to help stabilize the former Soviet republics' economies and assist in their transition to a free-market system. Proponents of such a program argued that the republics are too poor to rebuild their economies on their own. Achieving real reform would take years, possibly decades, if it could ever be achieved at all. Experts also point out that the people are impatient, and mounting social unrest makes real change all the more urgent. In February 1992, Boris Yeltsin warned that failure to help the commonwealth republics revitalize their economies will doom reform and possibly lead to the return of



In July 1991, the leaders of the "Group of Seven" (G-7) industrialized nations met in London (l-r, French President Mitterrand, President Bush, Italian Prime Minister Andreotti, European Commission President Delors, Japanese Prime Minister Kaifu, British Prime Minister Major, Canadian Prime Minister Mulroney, and German Chancellor Kohl). Although the G-7 nations rejected Mikhail Gorbachev's plea for economic aid at this summit, in March 1992, they introduced a large-scale aid package to assist Russian President Boris Yeltsin's free-market economic reforms.

an authoritarian dictatorship. Yeltsin criticized the United States for not joining other western countries that had already made strong commitments of aid.

The Bush administration hesitated to offer an assistance program because foreign aid and the president's perceived emphasis on foreign affairs over domestic affairs were becoming increasingly unpopular with the American people. Critics were especially suspicious of foreign aid to the former Soviet republics. They argued that valuable U.S. assistance would be squandered because Russia had not developed any structures that could absorb and efficiently distribute large-scale aid. The corruption and waste of the old Soviet system, these critics maintained, was still very much in place.

But members of Congress and prominent U.S. policymakers, including former president Richard Nixon, openly criticized the Bush administration for missing a historic opportunity to help capitalism and democracy take hold in the former Soviet republics. In addition, critics said, it was embarrassing for the United States that other countries had already made huge aid commitments to the commonwealth. Germany, for example, has pledged over $45 billion since 1989.

"A Peace We Must Not Lose." In April 1992, President Bush unveiled a

joint $24 billion aid package to Russia with the leaders of western Europe and Japan. In announcing the proposal, he said that winning the Cold War gave the United States and the world "a peace we must not lose." To protect this peace, the president said, the United States had to act. The assistance program consisted of $6 billion to stabilize the ruble (the Russian currency), $11 billion for food and medicine, and $4.5 billion from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Overall, the United States share of the $24 billion would be approximately $6 billion. President Bush recognized that this was a large commitment, but he argued that helping turn the former Soviet Union into a free-market system would offer the United States and its allies extensive opportunities for global trade and economic growth.

The aid package met with much praise and some criticism. Supporters said the assistance, although it obviously will not turn Russia's economy around overnight, would give the beleaguered Yeltsin leverage over the communists in the Russian legislature and help him move forward with his reforms.

Others asked why aid was focused on Russia, only one of eleven republics in the commonwealth. The West is moving closer to giving aid to the smaller republics, but not on the scale that Russia will receive. Some experts believe that by lavishing too much attention and assistance on Russia, western countries are neglecting the other republics, which could lead to instability down the road. Critics of this Russian-centered approach argue that it is fueling the fears shared by the other smaller republics that Russia will become the dominant power in the region. They encourage the United States to work harder to establish ties to all the republics, particularly Ukraine, the second largest, and perhaps most independently minded, republic.

However, others point out that Russia, with a population of 148 million, is the largest and most populous republic and has the strongest foundation on which to build a stable economy. U.S. policymakers contend that concentrating assistance and diplomatic efforts on Russia will automatically stabilize the entire commonwealth.

An Interdependent World

The effort by the United States, Europe, and Japan to assist the former Soviet republics is seen by many as symbolic of a new era of collective and multilateral approaches to solving international problems. The United States is not expected to have the military muscle or economic power to lead the world by itself in the twenty-first century. The U.S. Department of Defense is in the process of making deep cuts in its budget, and Germany and Japan are surging ahead of the United States in global economic competition. Explains one U.S. policymaker, "We are simply not going to get our way as often as before and we had better get used to it."

In the post-Cold War era, competition among the major global powers, most experts agree, will be economic, not military, in nature. But they warn that economic conflict like a trade war will be just as detrimental to global stability as an armed conflict. Fending off the Soviet

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Union during the Cold War tied the United States, Japan, and Germany together. What will stop these countries from turning on one another now that the Soviet threat is gone?

Leaders hope that the world's powers will realize that cooperation is essential for their own economic stability as well as for global stability. To help achieve this goal, analysts say that reaching an agreement to continue the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trades (GATT) should be a top priority. GATT was originally signed by ninety-six nations in 1947 to establish fair international free trade. Recent negotiations to renew GATT are deadlocked. If an agreement is not reached, the free trading system will collapse, creating competing trade blocs—Europe led by Germany, North America led by the United States, and East Asia led by Japan. The United States is already in the process of constructing the North American Free Trade Pact with Canada and Mexico to counterweigh the powerful European and Asian blocs.

But the creation of these competing trade zones also damages hope for foreign policy unity among the major powers. Instead, experts and world leaders hope that the United States, Japan, and Germany (and Russia if it becomes prosperous) can formulate an international economic policy and reach agreement on strategies that will promote growth in their countries. Economic interdependence and cooperation will lead to the creation of an international consensus on how best to confront global problems. If the joint effort to transform the former Soviet Union into a viable free-market democracy is successful, it will be an encouraging first step in establishing such an order.

For Further Reading

The following books and articles will provide information for further research on some of the topics covered in *The Breakup of the Soviet Union*.

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Smith, Hedrick. *The New Russians*. New York: Avon Books, 1991.

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The Breakup of the Soviet Union
Teacher's Guide

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The Close Up Foundation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that encourages responsible participation in the democratic process through educational programs and publications in government and citizenship. Close Up Publishing develops books, teacher's guides, and other materials designed to encourage critical thinking and inspire interest in current issues, government, foreign affairs, history, and economics.

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Contents

To the Teacher..... 3

Lesson Plans..... 5

Student Handouts..... 7

Test Materials..... 9

Answer Keys..... 11

To the Teacher

The Breakup of the Soviet Union, the latest chapter in relations between the United States and the former republics of the Soviet Union, outlines the events preceding and following the dramatic upheavals of 1991—the August coup and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December. *The Breakup of the Soviet Union* relates the circumstances surrounding the Soviet Union's demise and the challenges facing the former Soviet republics. When used in conjunction with Close Up's earlier edition of *U.S.-Soviet Relations*, these events take on even greater historical significance.

Like the *U.S.-Soviet Relations Teacher's Guide*, the *Breakup of the Soviet Union Teacher's Guide* is a tool for active learning and synthesis of the textual material. It offers classroom activities and handouts as well as a test and answer key for developing a comprehensive lesson plan.

Goals

This guide should help your students to:

1. describe the major events in the dissolution of the Soviet Union.
2. analyze the appropriate U.S. response to the needs of the former Soviet republics.
3. predict the course of future U.S. relations with the former Soviet republics.
4. speculate on the balance of international power in the twenty-first century.

Structure of the Lesson

The Breakup of the Soviet Union Teacher's Guide contains the following components:

Objectives
The student objectives include both cognitive and affective goals to help you measure student learning.

Key Terms
Key terms that will help students understand the concepts are presented in this section. The following activities will help reinforce student understanding of key terms:

1. Have a group of students develop a crossword puzzle using as many key terms from the book as possible. Distribute copies of the puzzle to the students and have them complete it as a review exercise before they take the unit test.

2. Divide students into groups. Assign each group five key terms, which they are to use in a rap, a poem, or a short story. Ask students to present their creations to the class, making sure that their fellow classmates will be able to understand the meaning of the key terms from listening to the presentations.

Motivator
The motivator is an activity designed to capture student interest, introduce the class to *The Breakup of the Soviet Union*, and encourage active participation by the entire class.

Student Activities
The guide contains three student activities that require students to exercise their critical thinking skills and do independent research. The activities also emphasize important information from the corresponding text.

Student Handouts
Student handouts can be reproduced for classroom use. Each is keyed to a student activity.

Test Materials
This section contains a variety of test questions that you can use to evaluate students' knowledge after completion of the lesson or that students can use as a self-check tool. It includes true/false, multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and essay questions taken from information presented in *The Breakup of the Soviet Union.*

Answer Key
The last section includes answers to "Questions to Consider While You Read," found at the beginning of *The Breakup of the Soviet Union*, and answers to all test questions in this teacher's guide.

Lesson Plans

Objectives

After completing this unit, students should be able to:

1. identify and describe the former Soviet republics.
2. form an opinion on granting U.S. aid to former Soviet republics.
3. summarize the major events leading up to the disintegration of the Soviet Union.
4. analyze the effect of the Soviet Union's collapse on U.S. foreign policy.
5. speculate about the future of U.S. relations with the former Soviet republics.

Key Terms

August 1991 coup
Commonwealth of Independent States
Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty
Crimea
free market economics
General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)
glasnost
Mikhail Gorbachev
International Monetary Fund (IMF)
isolationism
mixed economy
Nagorno-Karabakh
Nine-Plus-One agreement
North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
perestroika
Second Russian Revolution
Eduard Shevardnadze
Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START)
Boris Yeltsin
"500 day" program

Motivator

Two days before beginning the lesson on *The Breakup of the Soviet Union*, ask students to bring to class an article from a current newspaper or periodical about one of the former Soviet republics or the Commonwealth of Independent States. Have individuals verbally summarize the events covered in their article. After each summary, students should locate the republic(s) on the map on pages 10 and 11 of *The Breakup of the Soviet Union*. Then ask them to refer to the chart that profiles the republics on pages 20 and 21. Which republics are smallest, largest, most populous, poorest, richest? How does the information in the chart illuminate the concerns of the republic(s) implied in the articles? When the summaries are completed, have students identify which republics on the map and chart were not mentioned that day. Ask them to speculate why those republics may not be as newsworthy as some of the others.

Student Activities

1. Organize students into groups of equal size, each representing one former Soviet republic. Tell each group to research the geographic, ethnic, religious, and economic composition of their country. The research should include finding out customs, dress, climate, and products, as well as ethnic and religious descriptions. Tell students that after completing their research, they should prepare a presentation to give before the class. Encourage students to make presentations visual—using maps, charts, and pictures—as well as verbal. Groups should be prepared to answer questions from the rest of the students. Finally, create a bulletin board using the visuals from the group presentations.

2. Inform the class that they are going to play the roles of members of the U.S. House of Representatives. The bill before them for debate today will grant $12 billion in U.S. aid to the International Monetary Fund to help the former Soviet republics. Choose a student to lead the debate and keep order—or do it yourself. Set a time limit on the length of debate. Students should prepare sound, logical arguments for their opinions. After the debate, call for a vote on the bill. Tally the vote on the board and ask each student to remember how he or she voted.

Next, distribute **Student Handout #1**—Foreign Aid. Students should study the cartoon and complete the questions. Spend a few minutes discussing the cartoon and what they think it means. Ask the students to raise their hands if they answered "yes" to the question of giving aid on the handout. How many people changed their opinions since the "congressional" debate and vote? Explain that political cartoons reflect the artist's opinion but can influence public opinion in a humorous way, often by simplifying a person, situation, or issue. Show them more examples of political cartoons to familiarize them with the common symbols that cartoonists often use. You may wish to have them draw their own political cartoon about the former Soviet republics as a homework activity and display them on the bulletin board.

3. Instruct students to develop individually a timeline from 1989 to the present, listing the major events in the collapse of the Soviet Union and the recovery of the former Soviet republics since the breakup. Suggest that they use *U.S.-Soviet Relations*, *The Breakup of the Soviet Union*, library resources, and current newspapers and magazines to find the necessary information. When the timelines are finished, discuss whether the events point to any recognizable trends. Have students jot down any progress they notice within the republics and in their relations with the United States. Then, ask each student to share his or her observations with the class. Based on the trends they see, have them project into the future. How do they think the trends will play out in the near future? Do they think the patterns will continue?

Then distribute **Student Handout #2**—Thinking About the Future, instructing the students to answer the questions it poses. When handouts are complete, discuss their responses and jot them on the chalk board. Was there a broad consensus on any question? Are students optimistic or pessimistic about relations between the United States and the former Soviet republics?

Student Handout #1

Foreign Aid

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1. What does the above cartoon say about the willingness of the West to give aid to Russia ?

2. What does it imply about the living conditions in Russia versus those in the West?

3. Should the United States grant large-scale aid to the former Soviet republics? Why or why not?

4. Do you think this cartoon influenced or changed your opinion on the issue?

5. In what ways do you think political cartoons help or hinder the political process?

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Student Handout #2

Thinking About the Future

Think about the following questions and answer accordingly.

1. What do you think will be the most important issue in U.S. relations with the former Soviet republics in the next two years? Why?

2. How has the collapse of the Soviet Union changed the U.S. approach to defense and international relations?

3. If international power in the mid- to late twentieth century was roughly equated with possession of nuclear weapons, what will determine a country's relative power in the early twenty-first century?

4. Which countries will emerge as the most powerful in world politics in the next century? Why?

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Test Materials

True/False: Use T for true and F for false, and place your answer in the blank. Use the space below the item to correct any statements you think are false.

___1. The first signs of nationalist disturbance during Mikhail Gorbachev's presidency occurred in Lithuania.

___2. After Boris Yeltsin was elected Russian president, Mikhail Gorbachev became more liberal in his reforms.

___3. Communist party loyalists regarded the Nine-Plus-One agreement as a threat to their power.

___4. In a May 1992 meeting with U.S. President George Bush, the leaders of three former Soviet republics refused to give up their nuclear weapons because they feared Russian domination of the region.

___5. Boris Yeltsin's commitment to free-market reform won Russia aid from the International Monetary Fund.

Multiple Choice: Circle the letter preceding the best choice.

6. Which of the following reasons was the primary cause of Gorbachev's resignation from the Soviet presidency?

a. Communist hardliners tried to overtake the country.
b. He was no longer well liked.
c. Some republics created the Commonwealth of Independent States and dissolved the Soviet Union.
d. The Communist party was banned.

7. U.S. economic aid to Russia was approved for all *except* which one of the following reasons?

a. to give democracy a chance to be established.
b. to maintain the Commonwealth of Independent States.
c. to ensure the political stability of Russia.
d. to ease the transition to a market economy.

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8. Which one of the following republics did *not* agree to become part of the Commonwealth of Independent States in December 1991?

a. Azerbaijan
b. Ukraine
c. Moldova
d. Georgia

9. Isolationism is advocated by some U.S. policymakers because of all *except* which one of the following reasons?

a. The United States needs to concentrate on its economic competitiveness.
b. The Soviet Union and communism are no longer serious threats to the security of the United States.
c. The United States is largely unaffected by world events.
d. Domestic problems should take priority over foreign relations.

10. Which one of the following policy proposals was *not* advanced by Mikhail Gorbachev?

a. Nine-Plus-One agreement
b. creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States
c. "500 day" program
d. multi-party, multi-candidate elections

Fill in the blank: Complete each statement.

11. After Lithuania, the republics of Latvia, Estonia, and _____ declared their intentions to break away from the Soviet Union.

12. When _____ resigned as Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, he warned that "A dictatorship is approaching."

13. The three largest obstacles facing the former Soviet republics are nationalism, ethnic violence, and _____.

14. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, war between Azerbaijan and Armenia immediately broke out over the disputed enclave of _____.

15. The republics that house the Soviet nuclear stockpile are Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and _____.

Essay: Write a complete answer for each of the following questions.

16. What were Gorbachev's most serious miscalculations during his presidency? What were his successes? Are there ways in which he could have been more successful? If so, how?

17. What was NATO's original purpose in 1949? What role does NATO play today?

Answer Keys

Questions to Consider While You Read

1. Gorbachev tried to placate both reformers and communist hardliners by advocating gradual economic reform, or a mixed economy approach. If he had radically reformed the economy as liberals encouraged, he would have come under severe attack by hardliners and might have faced an uprising by citizens who would be discontented with the harsh transition to a market economy. *Glasnost* enabled the republics to speak freely against the central government, thus chipping away at its power and paving the way for independence movements.

2. In late 1990 and early 1991, Gorbachev aligned himself with hardline factions of the Communist party—the army and the KGB—to contain the independence movements. He expanded his powers as president and then sent troops to Lithuania. Although Gorbachev's move to the right strained U.S.-Soviet relations, the United States was still hesitant to accept Boris Yeltsin. Many viewed Yeltsin as an opportunist and a slightly authoritarian figure.

3. The coup failed primarily because the people of Moscow, led by Boris Yeltsin, revolted. The coup's organization then broke down, and its failure was imminent. Gorbachev was blamed by some for the coup because the people who planned it were supposedly his allies. He had promoted the people who became the coup architects to prominent positions within his government, thus fostering their claims to power and authority.

4. Challenges facing the Commonwealth of Independent States include the economy, ethnic unrest, and growing nationalism. Many predict the commonwealth will not survive because the unity is very fragile and superficial. There are few common ethnic, cultural, or political ties keeping them together. And Ukraine, a key republic, has indicated that it wants to be fully independent of the CIS and follow different economic reforms than Russia.

5. Some policymakers are hesitant to send aid to Russia because they fear the corruption of the old Soviet system would squander valuable U.S. assistance. They maintain that Russia has not developed effective structures to absorb and efficiently distribute large-scale aid.

Test Materials

1. F—Kazakhstan was where the first nationalist disturbance took place during Gorbachev's presidency.
2. F—Gorbachev was becoming more conservative at that time.
3. T
4. F—The republics agreed to give up their weapons by the end of the decade in exchange for U.S. aid and security considerations.
5. T

6. c
7. b
8. d
9. c
10. b

11. Belorussia or Belarus
12. Eduard Shevardnadze
13. economic reform
14. Nagorno-Karabakh
15. Kazakhstan

16. Students' answers will vary. What some deem as miscalculations on Gorbachev's part can be seen as successes by others. Generally, however, the following points could be listed as Gorbachev's miscalculations:

- underestimating the determination of the republics to be independent.
- underestimating the people's support for democratic reform.
- aligning himself with the right-wing communists.
- trying to maintain the central government's extensive powers too long, or negotiating the Nine-Plus-One treaty too late.
- trying to maintain his own power too long (by expanding his powers).
- reforming the economy too slowly.

Gorbachev's successes could be any of the following:

- *glasnost* and *perestroika* (or envisioning any reforms at all).
- establishing multi-party, multi-candidate elections.
- establishing greater diplomatic ties with the West early in his presidency.

Some students may rationalize that instituting any of these policies was really the "beginning of the end" for Gorbachev, communism, and the Soviet Union. The number of elements they mention and the ways they explain their choices are more important than the precise categories in which these elements appear.

Whether or not Gorbachev could have been more successful is a matter of opinion. Some may say that Gorbachev was as successful as any one person could be, given that he was trying to change a society so fundamentally and radically. However, some students may believe that he could have been more successful. Their reasoning should include references to the elements listed above.

17. Answers will vary but should include the following points: NATO's original purpose was to deter possible Soviet aggression in Europe. In November 1991, the NATO member nations agreed to continue the military alliance while acknowledging that their original purpose was no longer valid. More recently, NATO member nations suggested that the alliance be used as a peacekeeping force throughout Europe. Some believe that NATO is the only international organization that could successfully perform peacekeeping tasks too great for the United Nations.